

Questions from Employer TA Center Webinar:

Stay at Work and Return to Work: A Smart Strategy for Corporate Continuity

Date: October 27, 2015

The following are questions received during this webinar that time did not allow panelists to answer.

Q: Employees do not work for free - how much will an hourly employee get paid when he/she is not doing 100% of their job in an 8 hour day?

A: *Successful return-to-work (RTW) strategies do not insinuate employees work for free. While strategies will differ depending on the individual, the job and the employer, successful return-to-work programs are those that focus on keeping a valued employee. Many RTW programs include the use of temporary or permanent accommodations such as modifying a work schedule, job duties or methods for completing job duties, to name a few. More information about RTW programs can be found in the Job Accommodation Network's Accommodation and Compliance Series: [Return to Work Programs](#), which also includes a link to individual [state labor laws](#).*

Q: What is the most effective way to introduce this philosophy to my company? Since I'm not in HR, nor am I a director or manager I need to know effective strategies to present this information to the actual decision makers at my place of employment. Thanks!

A: *There are always forces in place to maintain the status quo. In order to counter the challenges you will face when introducing a new philosophy, I would first begin to think through the benefits of instituting this new philosophy at my company. I would begin the discovery to develop a persuasive business case by thinking through the following: Do you have a retention issue where costs of hiring and training new workers are out of line with the benchmarks of other similar companies? Do you have Section 503 requirements (are you a federal contractor?) that would be met by bringing injured or employees with disabilities back to work? Is your company trying to develop a competitive advantage in an industry that develops products or services for people who are aging or people with disabilities? Would your community relations benefit by positioning yourself as a company that understands the issues of people with disabilities?*

In addition to understanding my internal business case, I would work to understand the larger business case. e.g. people with disabilities are a large market segment - 1 billion worldwide and 56 million people in the U.S.; 10,000 baby boomers a day are reaching the age of 65 and will for the next decade while the next generation (particularly in terms of specific skills) is smaller than past generations; there are success stories of robust return to work program saving millions in short and long-term disability costs.

JAN's research shows that 58% of accommodations cost nothing and when there is a one-time cost the typical cost is \$500. With the information gathered from this discovery, I would develop an internal and external business case as well as 2 minute elevator speech. Then I would identify a leader in the VP or C-suite that might be receptive to the idea or a stronger stay-at-work and return-to-work program. You will

need this person to communicate the business case you've developed to other leaders as well as break log jams as they surface during the process of developing organizational change.

Finally, a number of resources for addressing return-to-work issues can be found in the [Return-to-Work Toolkit](#) for Employees and Employers. In addition, the RAND Corporation published a working paper entitled, [How Effective are Employer Return to Work Programs](#) in March, 2010, which highlights some of the research behind the logic.

Q: What do you mean by change in supervisory method?

A: *Some examples of changes in supervisory methods can be found in [the JAN ENews Quarterly Newsletter](#) (v11, i2, 2013).*

Q: I'd be interested to hear more about how vendors are used in this process. We use one to manage our leaves of absence.

A: *Many businesses have third party administrators (TPAs) manage their leaves of absences, short-term disability, long-term disability, return-to-work and even many now are contracting with TPA's to manage their interactive accommodation process. For return to work, the TPA would begin actively working with the injured or disabled individual once they are medically stable. The TPA would communication the company's philosophy of returning the person to work, review the job description of the individual to see if they can safely return to that position, and if not then they will review other positions that the injured or disabled person can do.*

They may also be charged with identifying accommodations so that the person can return to work. The TPA may conduct an ergonomic or other assessments. They may also be responsible to identify outside resources to make a worksite accessible (depends upon how the contract is written). The TPA may also coordinate a retraining program so the person can return to their original position or if the person is no longer qualified for the original position or the person cannot perform the job safely then the return to work specialist would work on retraining the person for another position.

Communicating with the injured or disabled employee is a major role for the return-to-work professional. Although, I would note that TPA for return-to-work communication should not replace communications from the supervisor or other employee's altogether. The example I shared of the employee injured when slipping on heavy equipment was an example when a TPA or external return-to-work professional was involved.

Q: Under an example for Mental Health you mentioned Supervisory Technique. Could you give a simple example of this?

A: *Some examples of changes in supervisory methods can be found in the [JAN ENews Quarterly Newsletter](#) (v11, i2, 2013).*

Q: I am a chair for an advocacy group within the Red Cross for persons with disabilities. Is the material copywrited or protected? I would like to send it to all members of our group if possible....

A: *No information generated from federal public dollars is copyrighted. So all of the JAN information is available for reuse.*